

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Reading Partners

Application ID: 13ES145412

Program Name: Reading Partners Texas

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The use of data from local school districts effectively demonstrates the extent and severity of literacy challenges among elementary school students in the targeted community.

(+) The application makes a very compelling argument about why this population is to be served, noting both the shorter-term impacts as well as life-long benefits of developing strong readings skills.

(+) The application persuasively presented information showing that children in grades K-5 from the targeted communities come from financially disadvantaged families and minority groups.

(+) The application designated the slot type and roles Members will fill (site coordinator, regional site coordinators, outreach coordinator) and established each role's significant responsibilities concisely.

(+) The plan appeared seamless in its flow from Members' efficient organization skills at the top, to the recipients, a child in a seat across from a recruited volunteer mentor.

(+) The application depicted well the two coinciding thrusts of each Member's work: outreach and tutoring.

(+) The application effectively demonstrates that the program design is both evidence-based and evidence-informed. The program incorporates findings from national studies and its own internal research and evaluation. Additionally, the program utilizes Individualized Reading Plans to ensure that the program approach is adapted to the needs of the individual students.

(+) The application makes a compelling case that the Reading Partners organization is capable of meeting reporting requirements, with rigorous data collection methods and collaboration with external partners on program evaluation.

(+) The applicant sought to identify underperforming low income economically disadvantaged and minority fourth graders and match mentors to aid in advancing their literacy. The applicant cited evidence, including a study by the

Annie E. Casey Foundation that students performing at a lower level in early grades are more likely to drop out in later years. The applicant was able to establish that it could impact its targeted population by making relatively early stage interventions to prevent students from later developing truant behavior.

(+) Retention and recruitment are key issues and concerns which the applicant had devoted time and resources to addressing. The applicant demonstrated prior evidence of its ability to retain over 90% of its volunteers based on a previous grant award.

(+) The application is strengthened by providing a clear and compelling process for collecting data to determine the impact of the investment, including what data is collected, who collects the data, and when it is presented. Furthermore, this process is connected to the activities undertaken by the AmeriCorps members as well as to state educational standards.

(+) A Stanford University study provided a forceful evaluation of the applicant's program. The study delineated that the applicant's data showed important positive differences in reading-skill gains as compared against a control group. This research was evidence-based.

(-) The application does not make a strong case that the target population is economically disadvantaged.

(-) The applicant did not present sufficient evidence explaining how an attitude of defeat affects a child's ability to perform.

(-) The applicant didn't provide data that established Fort Worth's need or sufficient data documenting the need in Dallas, which limited the application's effectiveness.

(-) The application fails to specifically discuss why the requested slot type is optimal for the proposed program design.

(-) The applicant did not present sufficient information on how the progress of students is measured. For example, the applicant states that one of the primary goals is to "see 80% of target students accelerate their rate of learning," but does not specify what this means or how the data collection effort will measure these results.

(-) The applicant states they have "consistently strong results," but does not show those results.